



MINUTES

Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
Policy Review Working Group
22358 S. Ellsworth Rd., Queen Creek, AZ
Municipal Services Building
San Tan Conference Room
February 21, 2012
6:00 p.m.

1. **Call To Order and Roll Call:** Meeting started at 6:07 p.m.
Members present: David Dobbs, Daniel Babcock, Dru Alberti (6:09 p.m.), Michael Shirley and Sylvia Tarin
Members absent: None
Staff present: Debbie Gomez (left at 7:20 p.m.), Adam Robinson, and Tracy Corman

2. **Introductions:** None.

3. **Public Comment:** None.

4. **Items for Discussion:**

- A. *Consideration and possible approval of the December 13, 2011 minutes.*

Motion: Sylvia Tarin

2nd: Daniel Babcock

Vote: Unanimous (Michael Shirley abstained from voting)

- B. *Discussion and possible recommendation on existing partnership guidelines, field allocation processes and fees for youth sport organizations.*

Adam Robinson responded to questions brought up at the last meeting about how much of an increase residents would be charged by partner organizations if the Town increased their fees. Based on the fees as presented, and the number of participants in the partner programs over the last year, Mr. Robinson estimated that the proposed increase would result in a per participant increase for compliant organizations of \$19 for baseball, \$20 for softball, and \$8.60 for football. Non-compliant organizations would see an estimated per participant increase of \$29 for baseball, \$30.50 for softball, and \$12.90 for football.

Mr. Robinson also reported on the maintenance costs of fields detailed in the Cost Analysis Report: Field Preparation, Maintenance, and Upkeep for League and Rental Athletic Activities at Desert Mountain Park. He said that the costs outlined in the report were above and beyond those associated with the typical use for an open park, and were those identified as being specific to maintenance for sports leagues.

The working group discussed the proposed fee increases. The following items were discussed:

- What the leagues pay to use the school fields should be considered, and whether leagues are likely to start using the school fields over the Town's fields. There was general consensus that the School District charges more for fields that are maintained at a lower standard and, unless the Town increased the fees by a large amount, it would be unlikely that leagues would favor using the School District's fields over the Town's fields.
- The cuts to the Town's budget make it necessary to increase fees to help pay the cost of maintaining the fields.
- For the most part people understand that fees need to increase, however there will be a perception that the quality and level of service for maintenance should also increase. Debbie Gomez explained that the increase in fees would help reduce the amount of subsidy the Town currently pays for the maintenance of the fields, but would not cover an increase in the level of service.
- With the proposed fees, in some cases, the Town could be close to only subsidizing \$0.29 per participant in youth sports for field maintenance costs. Lights would still be subsidized. Other cities make up their subsidy on youth sports by getting additional cost recovery on adult sports. The Town does not have the ability for adult sports to cover the cost of youth sports.
- A field use fee would be much easier to administer than a per participant fee for both the Town and the partner leagues.
- As recommended the fees would represent approximately a 14% per participant increase (Example given was how it related to softball prices; not sure that it's representative for all sports. For example, the percentage for football would be significantly less – 4.3-5.7%). Phasing in the fees could be an option, with a review every two years.
- There was concern that due to large budget cuts over the last few years, if the programs did not bring in enough revenue they could be completely cut. In light of this a 14% net increase of costs to participants may be very doable if it will keep program going. There will also be inflationary costs to consider in the future, and phasing in the increases could result in bigger increases. Doing the full increase now, and reviewing it every couple years may be more palatable to the public and the partners than having the fees adjust every year.

The Working Group discussed the residency requirement for compliant vs. non-compliant partners. Adam Robinson stated that staff needed the Working Group to develop a policy that staff could implement consistently, and that could include different requirements for different types of sports if the group thought it was appropriate. The following issues were discussed:

- The leagues usually do not control their own boundaries; they are typically set by the larger organization. Leagues must accept participants throughout their boundary, and don't have control over how many residents vs. non-residents participate if their boundary is not consistent with the Town boundaries.
- Leagues would have more flexibility if residency requirement was relaxed. For example, the girls' league was given an exception to keep a viable league for softball. Mr. Robinson also provided residency statistics for the audit performed on San Tan Football, and stated that their current resident participation was at 43%. Perhaps leagues could be given a certain amount of time to meet the requirement, so they do not have to meet it immediately.
- We already include the School District boundaries within our residency requirements due to past agreements with them. Would it be beneficial to include the Town's planning area also? Ms. Gomez pointed out that the planning area did not pay development fees or property taxes to the Town, and that the School District has a special agreement with the Town for the partners to use their fields. Mr. Robinson stated that the majority of the planning area is low density residential, and does not include the residential neighborhoods just east of the Town. He said that he would do a comparison using the San Tan Football participants to determine whether there would be much difference.
- In the past there was a concern that the Town did not want to subsidize non-residents as much as residents. Now that the overall percentage of the subsidy is decreasing, maybe this is not as big of a concern now. If the cost of maintaining the fields is going to remain constant, maybe there does not need to be a residency requirement. Partnership could be based on the service and value to the Town. Mr. Robinson explained that there has historically been a preference for serving residents before non-residents, and changes to this would need to be backed up by an explanation of costs vs. benefits.
- If leagues cannot meet the residency percentage and end up paying the non-compliant rates, residents will end up being impacted because the leagues will charge all of their participants more.
- Charging the non-compliant fees brings in additional revenues to the Town to help cover the costs for lights and maintenance. If there are fewer leagues that can meet the requirements for compliance, maybe the fees between the

two can be more balanced. We recognize that in the past the partners have not been able to meet the guidelines, and we can't force them to change their boundaries. If we don't want them to be non-compliant, we have to change our requirement.

- Being in compliance has other benefits besides the lower fees, compliant partners also get preference in the field allocation tier. Not being able to reserve fields makes it impossible to run a league.
- A tier for "preferred partners" could be added that allows compliant members to get both the fee reductions and field allocation preferences, with graduated tiers and compliance with residency becoming only a fee issue.
- Lowering the residency requirement to 50% could solve the issue. The leagues should be able to achieve that. Then they would be totally compliant, and there wouldn't have to be an exception tier. Not sure whether the Committee could sell a policy for less than 50% residency to the Town Council.
- This could create unfair advantages for some leagues because leagues are restricted by their boundaries.
- The Working Group asked Mr. Robinson to check with the existing leagues to find out if it would be possible for them to charge non-resident fees to their participants. Town residents paid for the construction of the facilities, so it should be palatable for non-residents to pay more.

Mr. Robinson said that the Working Group would need to have another meeting to discuss the youth sports seasons, as staff is running into concerns from potential soccer partners. He said that at the regular PRAC meeting on March 13 the Working Group could provide an update, and then hold one more Working Group meeting after that to make final decisions on fees, field allocations and seasons. Mr. Robinson said that there would be enough time to allow this as new fees and policies would not take effect until next calendar year due to timing of registrations.

Mr. Dobbs said that the Working Group should consider some sort of regular review of the fees after they are finalized to make sure they continue to work in the future as the community changes. Mr. Robinson agreed, and said that the leagues have also requested longer than one-year term partner agreements to allow for stability.

5. **Announcements:**

There were no announcements.

6. **Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn: Dru Alberti
Second: Michael Shirley
Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

PREPARED BY: Tracy Corman February 21, 2012

PASSED ON APPROVED ON: May 15, 2012, 2012



David Dobbs, PRAC Chair